

25270

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

~~SECRET-SENSITIVE~~

WASHINGTON

January 21, 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR HENRY KISSINGER

ACTION

FROM: Marshall Wright *MW*

SUBJECT: Ethiopian Security Situation

*105-44 105-44  
5-10-71  
(He receives on  
close-out)*

I feel conscience-bound to bring to your attention a situation that could, without much warning, become a major foreign policy problem for the Administration. It concerns our operations in Ethiopia, specifically Kagnev Station and the exposed position of its 3,500 Americans. The danger is that the situation could develop into what the vulgar and the hostile might view as "another Viet-Nam" type situation. (A recent memo from State is at Tab B.)

Background

I first became seriously concerned about Kagnev in November as a result of stepped-up terrorism in the area by the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF). Radical Arab support of the ELF, some of whose guerrillas have received El Fatah training, compounded my worries. I hosted an informal meeting with State and Defense personnel on December 3rd in order to learn more about the situation and the degree to which American personnel and installations were exposed. I learned that we were indeed vulnerable to ELF attack, even though we had been spared up to now. I generated some measures aimed at tightening our security procedures.

Since then, the situation has worsened considerably. In December, the Ethiopian Commanding General in Eritrea was ambushed and killed, martial law was declared in the region, and the Ethiopians publicly acknowledged that the ELF was receiving outside support. This month, the ELF killed an American for the first time, (whether purposely or not is unclear). A few days ago the ELF for the first time threatened to sabotage Kagnev Station in retaliation for US military assistance to Ethiopia. There are also credible reports circulating among western embassies in Addis Ababa that the ELF plans to kidnap an ambassador, perhaps ours.

Apart from the immediate ELF threat, we have the additional complication of the Emperor's health. Dick Helms summed up this worry in a "world problem" memorandum to you of January 14. He said: "[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]..... Should he die or otherwise be eliminated from

the throne, tribal divisions and elitist rivalries could result in destructive civil war or fragmentation of the empire . . . Unless a strong central government . . . emerges . . . Ethiopia could fall apart or become the scene of an East-West confrontation.

Soviet involvement in the Sudan's efforts to put down a rebellion in Southern Sudan is another East-West factor. Israel and Ethiopia have been assisting Sudanese rebels.

#### Action Taken So Far

The following measures, some in response to my December meeting with State and Defense, have been taken:

1. The number of guards patrolling Kagnew's facilities has been increased by 60. (26 Americans, 34 Ethiopians.) The first American guards have already been sent to Ethiopia.
2. Two US Army helicopters are to be sent to Kagnew within the next 60 days for use in ferrying personnel and in mail runs. (This will get us off the highways, the most dangerous place to be right now in Eritrea.)
3. An Army security team is going to Kagnew to see how security might be further improved.
4. Travel restrictions have been placed on all American personnel to insure their safety.
5. Radio communications between Kagnew facilities and Ethiopian security units have been improved.
6. Special precautions have been taken by our Ambassador in Addis Ababa and Consul General in Asmara to guard against their being kidnapped.

Frankly, these measures could prove to be totally inadequate, for the hard fact is that attacks on our people in Ethiopia could commence and escalate quickly and face the Administration suddenly with very difficult choices. These would range from a precipitous withdrawal from Ethiopia to a dramatically deepened involvement there made necessary to maintain Kagnew and the security of our people. (We have about 1400 dependents there, as of now.)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That you authorize:

1. The attached NSSM (Tab A) calling for a review of our interests in the Horn of Africa (primarily Ethiopia but touching on Somalia and the neighboring states) and options for US policy in the event of a sharp deterioration of Ethiopian security for whatever reason. (We would also call for an updating of the Ethiopian Contingency Plan dealing with the death or disability of the Emperor for WSAG consideration.)

Agree AK Disagree \_\_\_\_\_

2. Me to proceed vigorously in your name with Defense to take an in-depth look at the security of Kagnev Station and our personnel there, and to take whatever additional immediate steps can reduce the vulnerability of both.

Agree AK Disagree \_\_\_\_\_

3. Me to review with State and Defense how our MAP can be used to assist Ethiopians with their Eritrean security problems within the framework of the Nixon Doctrine.

Agree AK Disagree \_\_\_\_\_

Colonel Kennedy concurs

*See it in NSSM of what I do with Heilic  
Selapredies - make another  
NSSM.  
Great job - Marshall.*

*APR 25 1971*